



Highlights of [GAO-03-1166T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Committee asked GAO to discuss the Government Performance and Results Act's (GPRA) success in shifting the focus of government operations from process to results and to evaluate the extent to which agency managers have embraced GPRA as a management tool. Further, the Committee was interested in any recommendations GAO may have to improve the effectiveness of GPRA.

GAO is conducting a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of GPRA since its enactment, including updating the results of our federal managers survey. The results of this review will be available next month.

## What GAO Recommends

We did not make recommendations in this testimony. However, we suggested a range of options that the Congress could use to strengthen GPRA as a tool to meet the challenges the federal government faces at the beginning of the 21st century. These options include simplifying and streamlining agency performance information, developing governmentwide strategic and annual performance plans, enhancing congressional oversight, and establishing chief operating officers in selected agencies.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1166T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1166T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Patricia Dalton at (202) 512-6737 or [daltonp@gao.gov](mailto:daltonp@gao.gov).

# RESULTS-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

## Using GPRA to Address 21st Century Challenges

### What GAO Found

GPRA, which was enacted in 1993, provides a foundation for examining agency missions, performance goals and objectives, and results. While this building effort is far from complete, it has helped create a government-wide focus on results by establishing a statutory framework for management and accountability. This framework can improve the performance and accountability of the executive branch and enhance executive branch and congressional decisionmaking. In view of the broad trends and long-term fiscal challenges facing the nation, there is a need to consider how the Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and executive agencies can make better use of GPRA's planning and accountability framework to maximize the performance of not only individual programs and agencies, but also of the federal government as whole in addressing these challenges.

The necessary infrastructure has been built to generate meaningful performance information. For example, through the strategic planning requirement, GPRA has required federal agencies to consult with the Congress and key stakeholders to reassess their missions and long-term goals as well as the strategies and resources they will need to achieve their goals. It also has required agencies to articulate goals for the upcoming fiscal year that are aligned with their long-term strategic goals. Finally, agencies are required to report annually on their progress in achieving their annual performance goals. Therefore, information is available about current missions, goals, and results.

We are now moving to a more difficult but more important phase of GPRA implementation, that is, using results-oriented performance information as a part of agencies' day-to-day management, and congressional and executive branch decision-making. However, much work remains before this framework is effectively implemented across the government, including (1) transforming agencies' organizational cultures to improve decisionmaking and strengthen performance and accountability, (2) developing meaningful, outcome-oriented performance goals and measures and collecting useful performance data, and (3) addressing widespread mission fragmentation and overlap. Furthermore, linking planned performance with budget requests and financial reports is an essential step in building a culture of performance management. Such an alignment can help to infuse performance concerns into budgetary deliberations. However, credible outcome-based performance information is critical to foster the kind of debate that is needed.